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*The Mortality of Ministers contrasted with the
Unchangeableness of Christ:*

IN A
S E R M O N,

OCCASIONED BY THE DECEASE OF
THE REV. CALEB EVANS, D.D.

Who departed this Life Aug. 9, 1791,

In the 54th Year of his Age:

, P R E A C H E D

AT BROAD-MEAD, BRISTOL, AUG. 21, 1791,

By SAMUEL STENNETT, D.D.

TO WHICH IS ADDED THE

A D D R E S S

DELIVERED AT HIS

I N T E R M E N T,

By THE REV. JOHN TOMMAS.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE FAMILY
AND CONGREGATION.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED BY BYE AND LAW:

AND SOLD BY T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND; C. DILLY,
IN THE POULTRY; R. BISHOP, NEWPORT-STREET,
LEICESTER-FIELDS; AND T. KNOTT, LOMBARD-STREET.
AND BY W. BROWNE, AND J. COTTLE, AND THE OTHER
BOOKSELLERS IN BRISTOL. 1792.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]



TO THE
MOURNFUL RELICT AND FAMILY
OF THE DECEASED,
AND
TO THE SORROWFUL
CHURCH AND CONGREGATION
OF WHICH HE WAS PASTOR,
THE FOLLOWING SERMON,
AND
ADDRESS AT HIS INTERMENT,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
ARE
WITH GREAT RESPECT
INSCRIBED
BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE
AND SYMPATHIZING
FRIENDS AND SERVANTS,
THE AUTHORS.



A

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blessing of God, to afford it, than that addressed to the Hebrew-Christians in a similar situation,

HEB. xiii. 8.

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY,
AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER.

VICISSITUDE is written in striking characters on all the affairs of the present life. Every object our eyes behold, every relation among mankind, and every enjoyment whether animal, intellectual, or religious, is subject to fluctuation and change. But there are two concerns of this description, which have been the occasions of great affliction to pious men, and which the apostle seems to have had in his eye when he spake the language of our text: the one, the mortality of christian ministers; and the other, the instability of many professors of religion. Of the former he speaks in the verse preceding the text, and to the latter he refers in the words immediately following it.

*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God :
whose*

whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation : JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

This sacred aphorism, pronounced thus solemnly by the lips of an inspired apostle, and in the connection just stated, was most happily adapted to console the Hebrew-Christians, amidst the pungent grief they felt for the decease of their affectionate ministers; and to operate as a caveat against that versatility and desultoriness in matters of religion, which through the influence of Jewish-teachers and other seducers prevailed much at that time. And the words may and ought to be thus applied on all similar occasions. Let us therefore consider—the import of this striking proposition in the text;—the conclusions which naturally flow from it;—and the practical uses to which it is to be applied.

FIRST as to the import of the words.

The proposition in our text is couched in plain and easy terms, and carries on the face of it the greatest imaginable dignity and import-

ance. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

To interpret Jesus Christ here of the doctrine of Christ, is taking a liberty with the sacred text, for which I can see no necessity, and which I think sound criticism will not justify. The first idea that would occur to a plain man on reading the words is, that Jesus Christ *himself* is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. This sense of the passage forms a much more natural antithesis to the former verse than the other. For surely it is a more natural and striking sentiment, that "ministers are mortal, but Christ is always the same;" than that "ministers are dying men, but truth is always truth." Besides, what is here affirmed of Christ is no other than is asserted in many other passages of scripture. And the doctrine of his eternity and unchangeableness has a peculiar suitability in it to console the mind under the particular kind of affliction referred to. I shall therefore understand the words of Christ himself, as appears to me to have been the meaning of the inspired writer.

But

But it will be asked, Who is Jesus Christ? I answer, The same of whom the Hebrews had often heard, who some years before appeared in the character of a prophet, suffered death without the gates of Jerusalem, rose from the dead on the third day, and then passed up into heaven. Jesus Christ, “ the “ Son of the living God, his only begotten “ Son, the brightness of his glory, and the “ express image of his person * : every where spoken of as distinguished from the Father, and yet possessing one common divine nature with him. Now of him it is asserted in the text, that he is eternal and immutable.

He is eternal. Jesus Christ is *yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*. Terms which, when taken together, very naturally denote continued existence. For if no more is intended by them, and by that other similar phrase, *who is, and was, and is to come*, than what the words literally express, the like may be affirmed of every man, yea of children in the earliest stage of life. But it is plain the apostle meant to say that of him, which should distinguish him in point of excellence and glory from all others. It is as

* Mat. xvi. 16. John i. 14. Heb. i. 3.

if he had said, " There was no point of duration in which he did not exist, and none in which he will cease to exist." And I am the more inclined to think that this was his meaning, as the same sublime sentiment is expressed in many other passages, and in a variety of the most striking language. " He " was before Abraham, before the world " began, before any thing was made, in the " beginning. His goings forth were from " everlasting. And he will ever continue to " exist, the alpha and the omega, the be- " ginning and the ending, the same who is, " was, and is to come*." But this is not true of his human nature. That had a beginning. " He was made flesh. As the " children are partakers of flesh and blood, " he also took part of the same. He took " not on him the nature of angels, but he " took on him the seed of Abraham†." Eternity therefore is to be attributed to his superior nature only. He, the Son of God, is eternal. He exists yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

* John viii. 58. ch. xvii. 5. ch. i. 1, 3. Micah v. 2. Rev. i. 8.

† John i. 14. Heb. ii. 14, 16.

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He is also immutable. Jesus Christ *the same* yesterday, to-day, and for ever. To this purpose his unchangeableness is opposed, in the first chapter of this epistle, to the changeableness of the heaven, the earth, and all created things. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail*.” But immutability is not, cannot be, attributed to him as a man. He underwent the like changes with others, was an infant, a youth, and a man of mature age. He was subject to sickness, pain, and trouble; and actually suffered death. Immutability therefore, in like manner as eternity, is only to be understood of his superior nature.

Now from the eternity and immutability of Christ, thus clearly expressed and authoritatively asserted, there follow,

* Ver. 10, 11, 12.

B 4

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, Conclusions most certain, necessary, and important. As,

1. His true and proper divinity.

How a mere creature should be eternal and unchangeable is not conceivable. "The Word, who was in the beginning, and continues for ever the same, is God." And therefore he is to be divinely honoured and revered. "Let all the angels of God worship him. Let all men honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Let them with Thomas devoutly acknowledge him God, and with Paul proclaim him God over all blessed for ever. Let every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever *." Being thus eternal and immutable, and of consequence God, he is to be implicitly believed and confided in; to be loved with a most ardent and supreme love; and to be obeyed in all things with the most perfect

* John i. 1. Heb. i. 6. John v. 23. ch. xx. 28. Rom. ix. 5. Rev. v. 13.

cordiality.—But he who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is Jesus Christ: for the terms of the proposition are convertible. From whence it follows,

2. That the deity united itself to humanity.

This fact, which is a consequence from the truth asserted in the text, is elsewhere reported in terms the most clear, direct, and positive. “ The Word who was in the beginning, who was God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made; was made flesh and dwelt among us. Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross *.”

What amazing condescension, what unexampled philanthropy was this! Can we think of it, my brethren, without being lost in

* John i. 1, 3, 14. Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8.

wonder,

wonder, love, and joy ? What is man, O Lord, that thou art thus mindful of him, and the son of man that thou thus vifiteft him ? And how great are the obligations we are hereby laid under to his goodnefs ! The wealth of an archangel could not pay the debt. The debt can never never be difcharged. To what immense dignity is our nature exalted by its union with deity !—Union with deity ! An idea fo pleafing, fo interefting, fo marvellous as this, imagination in its utmoft ftretch could not prefent to the human mind. Think of this, O man, and be infenfible if thou canft to thine own importance. It was the Schechinah that was the glory of the tabernacle and temple, and it is the Son of God's fchechinizing in human flefh that is the glory of man. How highly favoured are we above all other creatures of God ! Angels look up to us with refpect, felicitate us on our honour, and bid us venerate ourfelves. Yes truly, we are great, we are noble, we are god-like creatures !

And yet this view of ourfelves hath no tendency to excite vain-glory. On the contrary, amidft thefe contemplations, all flattering ideas

ideas of our own personal and independent merit, to which we are prone in a rapture of self-love to pay idolatrous respect, all such ideas, I say, vanish into oblivion. Seeing at once the two extremes of human frailty and divine immutability united in our nature, we shrink to nothing under a conscious sense of our littleness, and at the same time aspire to every thing that is great under a full persuasion of our importance.

And surely no motive so noble, so august as this, could be proposed to the human heart, to dispose and animate it to the duties of virtue and piety. If God will indeed thus dwell with men, if he will unite our nature to his own, with what gratitude should we dedicate ourselves to his service! with what elevation of mind aspire to his moral likeness! and with what ardent desire look forward to the everlasting fruition of him in heaven! And our nature being thus ennobled, what generous sentiments should we cherish in our breasts towards each other! and how cheerfully should we exert our powers to promote the interests of all our brethren of mankind!

3. The

3. The eternity and immutability of Christ reflect a wonderful lustre on his mediation, and render him perfectly capable of fulfilling the various and important duties of it.

A Prophet of whom it may be asserted, that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is surely to be depended upon in all he says. Who would not wish to sit at the feet of such an instructor? His judgment is infallible, and his sentence upon every matter decisive. Neither Moses, Daniel, nor Paul, who excelled in piety, wisdom, and eloquence, were always the same. They perceived their ignorance, felt their weakness, and lamented their unworthiness. Their light however glorious was borrowed, their powers however extraordinary were held in absolute dependence on the will of their Master, and by the grace of God they readily acknowledged they were what they were. But Jesus Christ, to whom the perfections of deity are attributed in our text, hath every qualification requisite to a prophet inherent in himself, and subject to no controul from without. He possesses a conscious independence which
gives

gives dignity, stability, and effect to his instructions and decrees.

Jesus, the Son of God, is the High-Priest of our profession. And being "a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, without beginning of days or end of life," he hath the qualifications of a Priest in their highest perfection, and exercises them after such a manner as cannot fail of securing the object to be attained: so that it may be said of him, "his is an unchangeable priesthood *." How pleasingly venerable does *his* countenance appear, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, while arraying himself in the priestly garments of humanity! We stand and gaze at him with wonder, with the mitre on his head, the breast-plate on his bosom, and the censer in his hand; and with joy we hear the golden bells around the hem of his garment, reminding us of the business wherein he is employed. We see him offering the sacrifice without, and then passing within the veil, and sprinkling the blood before the mercy-seat: and while our eyes are fixed on him, thus officiating in all the glories of his superior nature, we join an infinite number of

* Heb. vi. 20. ch. vii. 3, 24.

his faithful people, assembled around the altar of burnt-offering, in shouts of harmonious joy and praise—"The Lord hath sworn, and
 " will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever,
 " after the order of Melchizedek *."

It is, my brethren, his eternity and immutability, with the other perfections of deity he possesses, that gives value to the sacrifice he offered on the cross, and insures success to his consequent intercession in heaven. Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Hear the great multitude around the throne of God above, whom no man can number, ascribing salvation to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb; and be assured beyond a doubt, that our divine Saviour is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The claims of justice are satisfied, the holy law of God is magnified, the basis of his moral government, which the powers of darkness had in vain attempted to shake, is established, an indelible mark of infamy is stamped on sin, and the equity of the divine

* Ps. cx. 4.

administration secures to the penitent sinner all that immense good, which mercy was ever inclined to bestow. " Grace now reigns " through righteousness unto eternal life, by " Jesus Christ our Lord. God hath thus " declared his righteousness for the remission " of sin; and is just while he justifies him " who believeth in Jesus *."

View him further in the character of a King, for such the man Christ Jesus is, and say what lustre this radiant jewel in his crown casts on his person, the throne whereon he sits, and all the acts of his mild and equitable government. The Son of God, whom the Father hath anointed King, and set on his holy hill of Sion, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; as wise, as just, as benign and propitious to his loyal subjects, as attentive to their interests throughout his unbounded empire, as able to restrain and conquer his and their enemies, as he ever was. And when his mediatorial kingdom shall determine, having subdued all things to him, he will himself remain immutable and eternal. Once more,

* Rom. iii. 25, 26. ch. v. 21

4. This affirmation concerning Christ in our text gives stability to the gospel, and the glorious hopes and promises it affords.

The scheme of salvation, in all the infinitely diversified parts of it, must necessarily be carried into effect. Not one link of the golden chain can ever be broken. The love in which it originated is the same. The wisdom which devised it is the same. The power that undertook the accomplishment of it is the same. Christ, who is at the head of this dispensation of grace, hath a comprehensive view of every thing relative to it; and hath provided for every possible contingent circumstance that may arise. "In him" are hid all the treasures of wisdom and "knowledge *." His piercing eye pervades the universe. The sighs of the most obscure faint, and the deep-laid machinations of the prince of darkness, are alike known to him. By what means the ardent love of his heart to the meanest believer is to receive its full gratification, amidst the most complicated schemes from a thousand quarters to defeat it, he accurately perceives; and the expe-

* Col. ii. 9.

dients requisite to render every secret and open attempt on his measures abortive, are all within his reach. Eternity and immutability are written in fair and legible characters upon every excellence, which adorns his person and renders him the object of the supreme adoration and love of the blessed above. Of his wisdom and power, his righteousness and truth, his clemency and love, it is equally true that they are unchangeable.

Can then his gospel, in which we have an exhibition of all these perfections concentrated as it were in a point, so that we here "with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord *;" can this gospel, I say, be mutilated, changed, and destroyed? Can this fair and noble edifice, founded in the immutable purpose of God, constructed in all its parts with the most admirable symmetry, raised by an exertion of power that draws the attention of angels to it, and completed after a model absolutely perfect; can it receive improvement from the aid of human art and invention, or be laid in ruins by the hostile

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

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attacks

attacks of pride and malevolence? It is impossible.

Changes may take place in the natural and moral world. Princes may be driven from their thrones, kingdoms may be shaken to their very foundations, mighty states and empires may vanish into oblivion, the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, the sun may fly from his axis, the moon may be arrested in her course, the stars may fall, and all nature become one universal wreck: but the gospel can suffer no change, the scriptures cannot be broken, the promise of God must be fulfilled, and the counsels of love respecting his church, and every individual that constitutes it, be carried into full effect. God has often shaken the earth and the powers of it, and we hear him saying in his word, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. But the things which cannot be shaken," of which description is the kingdom we receive from the Lord Jesus Christ, and the gospel, which is the grand charter of its rights and liberties, "these remain *"—remain unmoveable amidst all

* Heb. xii. 26, 27.

the assaults of earth and hell. And if it be asked, What is the reason, the ground, the security of our hope? the answer you have in the text—JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER. “If
 “ then an angel from heaven were to preach
 “ any other gospel to us, than that which
 “ Christ and his apostles have preached, let
 “ him be accursed *.” We proceed now,

THIRDLY, To consider the uses to which the doctrine in our text may be applied.

Many are the changes to which we are all liable in the present life, as hath been just observed. But whatever the resolutions may be which at any time take place in our persons and families, in the church of God and the world, however sudden and unexpected, and with whatever pleasing or alarming consequences they may be attended; the truth held up to our view in this discourse will have a happy effect, if duly regarded, to animate us to our duty, to reconcile us to our troubles, and to inspire us with tranquillity and joy. The aspect it bears to a great variety of cases,

* Gal. i. 9.

which might be profitably insisted on, we have not time particularly to consider. We shall therefore confine ourselves to the two objects which the inspired writer seems to have had chiefly in view.

1. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines *."

Many there were of this description in the primitive age of Christianity, such there have been in every age since, and such there are in the present times. If you ask me what these *divers and strange doctrines* are? instead of entering into a particular detail of them, I shall content myself with just mentioning certain first principles, which if duly applied, will assist you in determining what they are, and not fail to put you on your guard against them. The doctrines then that vacate and annul those eternal truths on which the authority of scripture is built;—the doctrines which evidently tend to inflate the mind with pride, conceit, and self-confidence, and to lessen if not destroy our obligations to the duties of piety and benevolence;—the doctrines which are built on such a construction

* Verse immediately following the text.

of scripture, as would not occur to the mind of any plain and honest reader, and for which reason we frequently hear it applauded as the fruit of distinguished wit and penetration;—the doctrines whose principal recommendation is their novelty;—in fine, all those doctrines which militate against the proposition in our text, the grand hinge upon which the gospel of Christ turns: all such I cannot but think strange doctrines, foreign to the scriptures, and injurious to men's everlasting interests.

Novelty, to which the leading idea in the text stands opposed, cannot surely be applied to the gospel without manifest impropriety, indecency, and I will add absurdity. Natural science, it is acknowledged, is in a progressive state. New discoveries are continually making. But they who would insinuate that the gospel is a novel business, or at least that a true statement of it is a discovery reserved to the present times, and in the course of things is yet further to be very materially improved; such men do great dishonour to the gospel. It ever was, is, and ever will be the same. And although the modus of many

facts, and of some doctrines built thereon by the express authority of scripture, was never designed to be fully explained in the present life, and therefore it is in vain to look for it to faculties incompetent to such explanation; yet the gospel itself, wonderful as it is, is clearly revealed in the Bible: and the very attempt to refine upon it, and make it palatable to the vitiated taste of depraved nature, may well induce a jealousy of the evil we are here guarded against. Let us then, bearing upon our minds this great truth, that Jesus Christ, and of consequence his gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, see to it that we are not tossed to and fro, not triflingly amused, not vainly puffed up, not incautiously led aside, by divers and strange doctrines. And the best means to this end are, a diligent attention to the word of God, and "the having the heart established with " grace *."—But it is time I turn your view to the other practical use to which the sublime aphorism in our text is directed, and that is,

* Verse after the text.

2. "A

2. "A patient acquiescence in the will of God, when the ministers of this blessed gospel are taken from us by death *."

Regard to our own interest, accompanied with an anxious concern for the cause of religion, induces many painful feelings on these occasions. But when we reflect that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and of consequence, that deprived as we may be of eminently useful ministers, neither *our* interests nor *his* cause can essentially suffer, for the one he will take effectual care of, and the other shall most certainly prevail, and gloriously triumph over all opposition; when we reflect, I say, on these things, our minds are relieved and comforted, and with cordial submission we say, Let the will of God be done! This is the consolation I wish to offer you, my friends, on this mournful occasion. It is solid consolation, the noblest and indeed the only effectual consolation that can be proposed. May your thoughts dwell on this great truth! May you enter into the spirit of it! So will your coun-

* Verse preceding the text.

tenances assume a chearful air, and your dejected minds become serene and happy.

But affliction ought to be felt: it cannot otherwise be salutary. It is a debt too we owe the memory of our departed friend, to pour tears over his tomb. The blessed Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, even though he knew his death would be quickly fruitful of the happiest consequences to him, his family, and the interests of religion. To assist your sorrows therefore by calling up to your view the person, countenance, and attitude of our friend; his character, manner of life, anxieties, and joys; reminding you at every step I take, that "Jesus," whom he so affectionately loved and faithfully served, "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" is not only allowable but expedient.

Were I then to describe him to you, standing where I now stand, dispensing to this numerous audience, with heart-felt pleasure and earnestness, that gospel, the sum of which hath now been given you; and then saying, in effect if not in so many words, "I know that ye all shall see my face no more;" were I thus to present him to your view, you
would

would I am sure, like the Ephesian-Christians at Miletus, “ weep sore, fall on his neck, and kiss him, sorrowing most of all for the words he spake, that you should indeed see his face no more *.” But it is not to his person, his diction, his attitude only, that I would recall your attention, but chiefly to his character and manner of life. And how glad should I be, pained as I am at my very heart for the loss of so good a man, and so affectionate a friend, had I his pen, his lips, to do that justice to his memory, which some of you cannot forget he did on a similar occasion to the memory of his honoured father†. We will however attempt it.

Doctor Evans was the son of the reverend Hugh Evans, many years pastor of this church, and colleague of the venerable Mr. Bernard Foskitt. The son he was of his tender love and fervent prayers. The piety and abilities of that excellent man he inherited, of which he gave early proofs under

* Acts xx. 25, 37, 38.

† In a Sermon on his decease, entitled “ Elifha’s Exclamation.”

his parental care and instruction. Of the warm and exemplary devotion with which he took upon him a profession of religion, in the church where I have the honour to preside, it was my happiness to be a witness. Having gone through the usual course of studies in the neighbourhood of London *, with the full approbation of able judges, he soon appeared in the character of a minister, with the hearty good wishes and prayers of the christian society to which he belonged. His talents, which were highly pleasing and popular, were some time exercised in a congregation in the metropolis †, to the great satisfaction of his judicious friends, who solicited his continuance among them. But at your earnest and affectionate request he returned to Bristol, and after having preached about eight years among you, became colleague with his father in this church. So that he was your minister about thirty-two years ‡.

* At the Dissenting Academy at Mile-End, now at Homerton.

† Unicorn-yard, Southwark.

‡ He married in 1762 Miss Sarah Jeffries, the only daughter of the Rev. Joseph Jeffries of Taunton, Somerset;

At his settlement I had the pleasure of assisting, and proposing to his imitation the example of the apostle Paul, “ who served the Lord with all humility of mind, and many tears and temptations *.”—*To serve the Lord*, in this christian society, in the seminary over which he presided, and in his extensive connections with the churches, I may venture to affirm was his grand aim, his persevering object.—That he served him *with humility* is evident, among many other proofs that might be mentioned, from the striking tokens he gave of a disposition, accompanied with the most candid and disinterested friendship, to prefer others before himself. Nor need you be told that his services, ever highly acceptable and edifying to you, were attended *with many tears and temptations*.

merfet; whose amiable character endeared her to all who had the happiness of her acquaintance. By her he had five children, three of whom are now surviving. She deceased in 1771. In June 1774 he married Miss Sarah Hazle, the daughter of a very respectable family in Bristol, and now his mournful relict.—In 1789 the Principal and Professors of King's College in the University of Aberdeen, conferred on him the degree of Doctor in Divinity.

* Acts xx. 19.

As

As a pastor he was faithful, laborious, and affectionate. His preaching was evangelical, experimental, and practical. His manner of address was grave but not formal, animated but not affected, commanding but not assuming. And it pleased God to crown the word thus preached with great success, as appears from the present flourishing state of this numerous congregation. Over the affairs of the church he presided with prudence, candour, and steadiness. He rebuked with all long-suffering, exhorted with all simplicity, and with a feeling heart administered comfort to the afflicted.

But his labours, in the pastoral office, were not confined to the house of God and the houses of his friends. Many occasional sermons he published, and other tracts * in defence of the leading truths of the christian religion. Particular mention should here be made of his late "Discourses on the doctrine of a crucified Saviour," which you received at his hand with so much pleasure, and which

* His *Address to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity* should here be particularly noticed, as it was so well received: it passed through five editions.

he presented you and the world, as a memorial of his firm attachment to that fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the Atonement, which he had ever made the grand topic of his ministry. So far was he from being ashamed of the cross of Christ, that he gloried in it; for it had been the power of God to his salvation, and to the increasing joy of his heart.

And yet amidst the zeal he felt for the truth, he knew how to exercise charity towards those from whom he differed. He was no bigot, he could not be such, for he well understood the rights of private judgment, was sensible of the weakness of the human intellect, and felt the difficulties of truly upright minds on points wherein he and they could not agree. Every possible allowance therefore he was disposed to make for the mistaken reasoning of others, not daring to attribute what he accounted error to a depraved temper, without such evidence of the fact as could not be resisted. And all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, of whatever denomination, he cordially embraced, and was ever ready to serve to the utmost of his power. Zeal and love, steadiness

ness and candour, seriousness and chearfulness, integrity, I will add, and the most perfect frankness of temper, he considered not only as reconcileable, but as virtues which reflect a real glory on each other. With these his profession as a christian and a minister was adorned, while his general character was held among all ranks of men in the highest respect for probity, honour, and benevolence.

Imperfections he doubtless had, but they were of such a kind, and contrasted with such real excellencies, that they who knew him required but a moderate degree of candour to overlook them. And although, on some extraordinary occasions, he might in a small degree be carried beyond that evenness of temper he aimed always to preserve, yet such warmth could produce only a transient effect upon their minds, who had continual proof before their eyes of the generous principles which uniformly governed his conduct. The restraints however he laid on himself, in some situations of peculiar trial, did singular honour both to his good sense and piety.

In such manner did he demean himself as a christian minister and pastor of this church.

Permit

Permit me, before I pass on to the other relations he filled in life, to address the people of his charge in a few words of sympathy and exhortation.

Those of you, my dear friends, whose heads now begin to be silvered with age, well know his manner of coming in and going out among you, from the earliest stage of his ministry to the close of his life. And I am persuaded the impressions made on your hearts, by his fervent zeal, by his tender sympathy with you in your sorrows, by his cordial friendship, and by his prudent and exemplary conduct, will not soon be erased. No. I see the silent tear fall from your eyes, and can easily imagine from my own sensations what are the painfully-pleasing feelings of your hearts. He loved you and you loved him. May his memory be embalmed in your bosoms with a fragrance that no length of time can dissipate !

And you, my young friends, who received your first religious impressions from his awakening ministry, for whom he travailed in birth till Christ was formed in you, and who were initiated by his kind hand into the school of your divine Master ; your sorrows abound.

In

In the language of Thomas to his fellow-disciples you are ready to say, " Let us go and " die with him *." Deprived as you are of your spiritual father, your able instructor and guide, you may be allowed to weep. But let not your sorrow exceed its due bounds. Remember, your tears, if turned into a right channel, will become occasions of joy. Consecrate therefore, I beseech you, that grief you feel on this occasion to the glory of God, and your own furtherance in real piety. The frequent remembrance of those devotional exercises of your hearts under his ministry which gave birth to your profession, will be of no small use to you in the future course of it.

With you all, my friends, I heartily sympathize. Your loss is great, very great ; but Oh ! how great is his gain ! It is greater, far greater, than words can describe or heart conceive. Methinks I hear him bid you wipe up your tears, kindly adding in the language of his divine Master when he took his leave of the apostles, " If ye loved me you would " rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father †." But you have this further cause

* John xi. 16.

† John xiv. 28.

of joy, on which I would wish you to dwell in your meditations, I mean the consideration that " Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He changes not. He pities you, and in his own good time will send salvation to you. The place of his faithful servant, whom he has received to the arms of his mercy, he can and I trust will soon supply with a pastor after his own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. To that end let me entreat you to cultivate the most cordial friendship and unanimity among yourselves. Beside the advantage which will result thence to yourselves, you will thereby give the fairest proof, to all whose eyes are fixed upon you at this juncture, of that real affection you bear to his memory, whose departure, amidst these ensigns of death, you so feelingly lament. I beseech you also to pour out your united supplications to God for a large effusion of his Spirit upon you all; and may that fervency accompany your prayers, which so remarkably and pleasingly distinguished his on many occasions of social worship! Be thankful that he was continued so long among you, and that you reaped so

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much

much real pleasure and advantage from his enlivening and edifying ministry. In fine, "Remember him that had the rule over you, "and who spake to you the word of God, "and follow his faith, considering the end "of his conversation *."

A word I must also address to those who have long attended his ministry, but, alas! remain still strangers to the vital power of religion. Would to God that his death may be the happy mean of effecting that, which neither his convincing reasonings nor his warm expostulations could compass! an object which he had much at heart, and which will I doubt not, when you come to have a right sense of things, greatly endear his memory to you. Call to mind the solemn truths he held up to your view, to awaken you to a serious concern for your everlasting salvation; the powerful arguments he urged upon you, to dissuade you from the service of sin and Satan; and the affectionate terms in which he represented to you the tender compassions of the Lord Jesus Christ for the chief of sinners, and the unsearchable riches of his

of better * Verse before the text.

grace,

grace. And seriously consider with yourselves what an awful account you will have to give at the tribunal of the great God, if you shall be found to have treated all these things with negligence and contempt. But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. May you behold his face on that great occasion with joy and not with grief, and share with him in those unutterable pleasures, to the enjoyment of which he so ardently wished to be the happy instrument of conducting you !

Hitherto we have considered Doctor Evans in the characters of a Christian Minister and Pastor, let us now view him in that of a Tutor. His good sense and piety, the education he had received, his acquaintance with men and things, and the knowledge he acquired by diligent study and reading, all happily qualified him for this important office. A seminary for the instruction of pious young men for the ministry, had been long established in this city. But the respectability to which it quickly arose, upon his entrance on this department, was owing both to his

generous and indefatigable exertions among his friends, and to the great ability, prudence, and diligence with which he presided over this excellent institution. The improvement of those committed to his care in useful literature, particularly in those branches of it which with the blessing of God might render them acceptable preachers of the word, was his earnest wish ; and his incessant labours to that end were crowned with no small success. His sanguine expectations may indeed in some instances have been disappointed, yet he had the happiness of seeing many churches, in the neighbourhood and at remote distances, supplied from hence with able and successful ministers. Nor will those worthy and useful men easily forget the obligations they owe to his excellent instructions and wise counsels, all which they received from him, as with freedom and faithfulness, so also with fervent piety and endearing friendship.

The perfect harmony, too, which subsisted between him and a neighbouring minister lately deceased, who assisted in the academy *, reflected no small honour upon them both,

* *Rev. James Newton.*

while

while it contributed greatly to the success of the grand object they mutually had in view. The decease of that valuable man was one among the many afflictions which deeply wounded his heart. They are now, alas! both removed, and we deeply lament the almost irreparable loss. God can, however, and it is our earnest prayer that he will, supply the places which they with so much honour filled in this useful institution, by men endowed with the like gifts and graces which qualified them for these important stations!

May you, my young brethren, who by this affecting providence are deprived of your generous patron and able instructor, be comforted under your heavy loss with the consideration, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." That God who has taken away your master whom you dearly loved from your ^{heart} head, knows how to pour a double portion of his Spirit upon those whom he may raise up in his room. Call frequently to your remembrance the many seasonable instructions he daily gave you, the many fervent prayers he poured out for you, and the edifying example he set you.

And may that affection which you wish to express in every possible way for his character and memory, be an additional motive to those more noble ones of zeal for the glory of God and the good of men, to stimulate you to the most diligent exertions, in the prosecution of your further preparatory studies for the ministry. So may you, my dear friends, having received that "unction from the holy one" which teacheth all things *, appear with distinguished lustre in the christian church, and "approve yourselves workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth†."

And now after what hath been said of this excellent man, in the characters of a Christian Minister and Tutor, it might naturally be supposed I should have little further to add respecting his exertions in publick life. But it is otherwise. He considered himself as moving in a larger sphere than hath been described, and was disposed to embrace every opportunity that offered of glorifying God and promoting the good of mankind. Op-

* 1 John ii. 20, 27.

† 2 Tim. ii. 15.

portunities

portunities indeed he sought, and, favourable ones arising, he was ever solicitous to improve them to the purposes just mentioned. Among the many schemes he meditated for the publick good, those of erecting and supporting schools for the instruction of destitute children, and clothing them *; and of building places of publick worship in neighbouring villages †, deserve to be particularly mentioned. In these offices of benevolence, so interesting to civil society and to the welfare of individuals, he laboured with great zeal and activity. And while he stirred up others to their duty, he failed not himself to set them an example. A narrow fordid spirit he abhorred: on the contrary, as he loved so he devised liberal things. Hospitality flourished in his house, and the assistance he chearfully afforded to the poor, and to many useful schemes and institutions, received a check from no quarter but the duty he owed his family, and scarcely from that.

* Broad-Mead, Bristol; Downend, and Mangotsfield, near Bristol.

† Downend, Thornbury, &c.

In the service of the churches far and wide, and especially in the west, he exerted himself with ardent zeal and indefatigable diligence. Of him it might be truly said, that “the care of the churches came upon him daily*”—care to supply those of them which were destitute with suitable ministers; to procure temporal assistance for such as were in deep poverty; to give advice upon questions of importance; and to compose differences, which tended to reflect a dishonour on religion, and unhappily obstructs its progress. “Who was weak, and he not weak? Who offended, and he burnt not†?” Many long and weary journies did he take to ordain ministers, to meet his associated brethren, and in concurrence with them to forward, by preaching and other social exercises, the cause of truth, piety, and love. But he did not always meet with those returns which might naturally be expected. On such occasions, however, he silently wept, committing his cause to God, and indulging no undue resentments against those who had failed in regard of affection and candour, as well as of that respect with

* 2 Cor. xi. 8.

† Ver. 29.

which

which in point of common decency they ought to have looked up to him. But he was not to be discouraged by any of these painful circumstances, not by the unkindness of brethren, nor by the abuse of determined adversaries, from pursuing the path of duty, however rough, which Providence had marked out for him.

He often recollected the conduct and example of the apostle and his brethren in the ministry : nor could he easily forget what was their language under circumstances of peculiar discouragement. “ Giving no offence,
 “ say they, in any thing, that the ministry
 “ be not blamed ; in all things we approve
 “ ourselves as the ministers of God, in much
 “ patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in
 “ distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in
 “ tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fast-
 “ ings ; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-
 “ suffering, by kindness, by the holy Ghost,
 “ by love unfeigned, by the word of truth,
 “ by the power of God, by the armour of
 “ righteousness, on the right hand and on
 “ the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil
 “ report and good report : as deceivers, and
 “ yet

“ yet true: as unknown, and yet well
 “ known: as dying, and behold we live:
 “ as chastened, and not killed: as sorrow-
 “ ful, yet alway rejoicing: as poor, yet
 “ making many rich: as having nothing,
 “ and yet possessing all things*.” And
 however he was at times almost ready to
 faint, of which some tender expressions in
 his correspondence with me will not be easily
 forgotten; yet by the grace of God resuming
 his wonted resolution, he could add, “ None
 “ of these things move me, neither count I
 “ my life dear unto myself; so that I might
 “ finish my course with joy, and the ministry
 “ which I have received of the Lord Jesus,
 “ to testify the gospel of the grace of God †.”

One affliction however he met with in the
 close of his pilgrimage, which rapidly exped-
 ited the moment of his receiving a bright
 crown at the hand of Jesus his righteous
 judge. But deeply wounded as was his
 heart, fraught with exuberant and disinte-
 rested friendship, no wound given, whether
 intentionally or otherwise, could reach his
 name, which had been rendered dear to all

* 2 Cor. vi. 3—10.

† Acts xx. 24.

who

who knew him by a steady course of virtuous and benevolent actions. Yes. He felt the wound. He predicted the event. The last enemy he saw making hasty steps towards him. But he was prepared to meet him. Often had he expressed to me his wish to be gone, to recline his weary soul on the bosom of Jesus, to join associated angels and saints, and to drink at the fountain head of those living streams which make glad the city of God.

In the interval between his first paralytic seizure and that which put a period to his life, he had the possession of his reason, although a general languor prevailed over his frame. Great was the calmness of his mind, the gentleness of his spirit, and his patient acquiescence in the will of God; and with no small pleasure do his family recollect the pious and affectionate intercourses that frequently passed between him and them during his illness. Such was his concern to do good, that in the weak state he was a few days before his decease, he dictated a letter to a young friend and relation at a little distance, in terms which give a pleasing idea of the devout, tranquil, and benevolent frame of his mind.

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The cordial and tender manner likewise in which he often expressed his forgiveness of the injuries he had received, made a deep impression on the hearts of those who attended him; the remembrance of which, as it affords a striking evidence of his piety, they cannot but wish to retain, while at the same time they sincerely wish to forget the injuries themselves that were the occasions of it.

To such a degree of strength and vigour he recovered, in the course of about two months, from his first attack, that we began to flatter ourselves with the hope, that it was the will of Providence he should not only survive, but resume his former station of active usefulness. God however, in his infinite wisdom, had determined otherwise. On a sudden the shock was repeated, and left him for two days in a state of insensibility; at the close of which, the ninth of August, he gently fell asleep in Jesus, in the fifty-fourth year of his age. An age at which, in the course of nature, his continuance for ten or fifteen years longer might have been expected. In a sense however he might be said to have attained this last term, if we measure his life not by the efflux of time,
but

but by the variety and multiplicity of his active exertions for the glory of God and the good of mankind.

And now having affectionately wept with the dear people of his charge, with our young brethren of whose studies he had the direction, with many a weeping church, and many a weeping friend; let us all mingle our tears with those of his surviving family, his numerous relations, and especially his deeply afflicted widow and children. Were it not, my friends, for the danger of touching too strongly your feelings, and giving a too sharp accent to your sorrows, I might go out in a description of the virtues he exhibited in each of these relations, of which you have had many endearing proofs. To say to you who had the honour to derive from him, that he tenderly loved you, and was solicitously concerned for your temporal welfare, is to say no more than is true of most if not all others in the like intimate connection. But when I remind you of his ardent wish and uniform endeavours to promote your best and everlasting interest, you have then in your recollection the noblest proofs of genuine affection

and cordial friendship. But need I remind you of these things? Methinks I have little occasion to do it now your minds are in so tender a state. You cannot forget, to use the language of scripture, how affectionately desirous he was of you; how willing to have imparted to you his own soul, because ye were dear to him; and how earnestly he exhorted you to mind the grand concern, and to walk worthy of the religious privileges you enjoyed. These his efforts on your behalf, accompanied with earnest prayer to God, have I hope produced on your minds a salutary effect. If so they will not fail to endear his memory to you. And it cannot but give you pleasure to reflect, amidst your painful feelings on this sad occasion, that your affectionate and dutiful carriage towards him, of which he was pleasingly sensible, afforded him great comfort amidst the many anxieties and labours of his public station. May his wishes, in their utmost extent, be realized in every one of you! May that piety which warmed his heart and governed his life, dwell richly with all its powers and consolations in your breasts! And may your lives exhibit to all around you a fair copy of that example he set you!

To

To the mournful relict of our dear deceased friend, it remains that I address a few words of sympathy and consolation. Your affliction, my dear Madam, is very great. A friend you have lost in whose society you enjoyed many intellectual and religious pleasures; a friend ever ready to counsel, assist, and comfort you; and a friend on whose arm you hoped to have gently leaned, while sloping the remainder of your way down the hill of life. But though deprived of so great a blessing, you have many considerations of a consoling nature to reconcile you to your loss. Beside the reflection that all his sorrows are at an end, and that he is ineffably and eternally happy, you have the pleasure to reflect that it was ever your unremitting concern to soothe his cares, to animate his zeal, and to promote his usefulness as he passed to that blissful state. And it is your happiness also that his family, which were so dear to him, are disposed by motives of affectionate attachment to yourself, as well as the duty they owe to his memory, to contribute all in their power to your comfort the remaining part of your pilgrimage on earth. And above all it should afford unspeakable joy to your heart
to

heart to reflect, that Jesus Christ is ever the same, and that you may therefore assuredly hope his kind hand will ere long safely conduct you to those mansions of eternal blessedness, whither he and many others of your relatives and friends are already arrived.

To close the whole. May we all be sensible of the brevity and uncertainty of human life, and of the great importance of being prepared for death ! May we be followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises ! May their departure hence whom we dearly loved, have a happy effect to weaken our attachment to this vain world, and to accelerate our progress to a better ! May we on all such occasions as these endeavour patiently to acquiesce in the will of God, knowing that he cannot do wrong ! And may we aspire to a still nobler height of devotion, even that of glorying in tribulation, to which a firm persuasion of the great truth asserted in our text is capable of elevating us—JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTER-DAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER.

T H E E N D.

AN
ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT THE
INTERMENT
OF
THE REV. CALEB EVANS, D.D.
BY THE REV. JOHN TOMMAS.

A N

A D D R E S S, &c,

IN vain we ask for information from the light of nature, concerning the entrance of sin and death into our world: we are left in the dark, and are utterly at a loss how to account for it. But revelation informs us fully on these heads. From thence we learn, that “by one man sin entered into the world, “and death by sin: and so death passed upon “all men, for that all have sinned,” Death entered as the desert of sin. Man was capable of dying, as sad experience proves; yet nothing from without or from within could subject him to death without sin.

And death came into our world as the effect of the divine appointment respecting sin : this is made known by revelation, and the execution of the decree, “ It is appointed for man “ once to die.” This appointment is universal, and not to be repealed : “ one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.” We are instructed by the scriptures to consider death as the sentence of the law.

The triumphs of death are vast and extensive ; not one of the sons and daughters of Adam escapes his all-conquering arm. We are called to endure much as we march on our way to the grave, and our feelings are most sensibly touched, when required to attend the remains of our friends thither ; especially if they have been agreeable and useful to us, and to others, and most of all so if they have been like our dear deceased friend.

He descended from a line of pious ancestors, both by father and mother ; among whom were some eminent ministers. He was blessed with good natural abilities, which discovered themselves in early life, and inclined his dear Father to give him a liberal education,

education, earnestly praying that he might serve God in the Gospel of his Son. And when serious impressions made their appearance, which they did in early life, and gave evidences of a divine change; his father and other religious friends were led to hope God had designed him for the service of the sanctuary. From that time his application and improvement were manifest, until his preparatory studies were finished.

Thus prepared by a course of academical learning; blest with a heart-felt experience of the power of grace; warmed with zeal for the glory of God, a fervent love to the souls of men, and a desire to be useful in the church of Christ, he entered upon his public work. And he soon discovered himself to be an able minister of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit. His labours in this early stage of his life, met with general acceptance, and he was frequently called to preach. His industry was great, and his improvements were in proportion.

He was possessed of real candour. The rights of private judgment, which he well understood, were in his apprehension sacred.

But he was not indifferent to sentiment. He would with severe investigation examine and judge for himself; and when once his opinion was settled he made no secret of it, but would preach it without reserve; and if opposed would defend it, but was still himself open to conviction.

The benevolence of his disposition was such as led him with great readiness to do every office of kindness to others in his power: he did not wait for repeated solicitations, nor think himself happy if he escaped an application; but was foremost with his advice, his purse, and his prayers, in every design calculated to relieve the indigent, instruct the ignorant, give ease to the pained, and health to the sick; to soothe the miseries of age, and rescue giddy youth from the early habits of vice. All these offices were attended with labour and expence to himself; nor did he at all times meet with the returns of gratitude that might be reasonably expected.

He soon became popular, and was well attended when he appeared in publick. God giving testimony to the word of his grace, many felt the saving power of the Gospel,

were turned from darkness to light, from the power of satan to God ; and were built up in faith and holiness. His popularity was not the effect of novelty, nor the result of superficial attainments : this was fully evident, for it was not the blaze of a few months, but continued to the end of his life and ministry.

You who have for many years enjoyed the benefit of his ministerial talents know, that his preaching was solid and judicious, the fruit of mature thought and labour. He did not offer to God that which cost him nothing, he could not allow himself in idle neglects, or unguarded liberties, where the honour of divine truth and the good of souls were concerned. His manner was grave and serious, and you that sat under his ministry statedly will remember, that upon awakening and important subjects he was solemn and awful, so as to engage the attention and affect the hearts of those that heard him. His subjects were the great things of God's law, and the peculiar doctrines of the gospel of Christ, which he had fully digested in his own mind, and knew well how to represent to others, so as to impress and improve. His discourses
were

were upon the most weighty and serious subjects; composed with judgment, disposed in the best order, delivered with a manly dignity, and a becoming warmth and zeal; which engaged attention and gave delight, and acquired him the great esteem of the serious and judicious in all the congregations wherever he came.

He excelled in prayer in general, and was remarkable for pertinence and fulness of matter upon special occasions. And you among whom he laboured, and over whom he presided, know with what affection and tenderness, with what faithfulness and diligence, he had his conversation among you; and with what fervency he poured out his soul in prayer to God for you. It highly concerns you to call to mind the many important truths he laid before you, and the many warnings he gave you; and to enquire what fruit you have brought forth, and in what circumstances you are likely to meet your beloved pastor and minister at the bar of God. May it be to his joy, and may you be his crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord!

He was exemplary in all the relations of civil life, as a husband, a father, a brother, a master,
and

and friend : in tender affection, faithfulness, wisdom, and prudence, he was an example to all around him. There are many prayers on the record of the divine remembrance, offered by him for you all, that will have an answer in God's own time. And if you wish to meet him with comfort, and dwell for ever with him, forget not his advice to you, to be followers of him as he was of Christ, but no further.

He was a warm advocate for civil and religious liberty, and greatly rejoiced at the increase of both. His concern for the publick upon all occasions was very discernible, and his petitions were fervent and suitable. The protestant interest lay near his heart, and he most earnestly prayed for more of a spirit of love and unity amongst the assertors of it.

The death of faithful ministers has always been looked upon as an event that speaks very loudly to those among whom they laboured. And when I think how many ministers of Christ in this city and elsewhere have been removed of late by death, my spirits almost fail within me. Doth not this providence call upon us who are left to labour a little longer

longer in the vineyard, to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ? We should call to mind, that our work will soon be finished, and the places and persons which know us now, will soon know us no more for ever. May we be excited to greater diligence and faithfulness in that important work in which we are engaged, that when our Lord comes we may be ready also !

T H E E N D .

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